

Operation Bulldog Mammoth

U.S., Iraqi troops strike insurgents where they live

Photos and story by Sgt. Christopher Stanis
1st Armored Division
Public Affairs Office

ABU GHURAYB – Task Force 1st Armored Division's 3rd Brigade Combat Team from Fort Riley, Kansas, conducted a brigade-sized cordon and search of an Abu Ghurayb apartment complex, northwest of Baghdad Dec. 4 — making it one of the largest military operations since President George W. Bush declared an end to major combat operations in May.

The operation was named Operation Bulldog Mammoth.

"Cordon and searches are normally at the platoon and company level," said Maj. Dale Ringler, 3rd Brigade Combat Team operations officer. "Very rarely do we (include) two battalions (plus supporting units) and make it a brigade-sized operation."

In total, according to Ringler, approximately 1,447 troops were involved in the five-and-a-half-hour operation.

Forces ranged from infantry to military intelligence, with major players including 2nd Battalion, 70th Armored Regiment; Fort Bragg, N.C., based 1st Bn., 325th Airborne Infantry Reg.; more than 300 Iraqi Civil Defense Corps personnel; and an Estonian platoon — all conducting the search of the 2,400 apartments and 53 additional buildings.

Two companies from the 709th Military Police Bn. provided an outer cordon.

The 1210th Tactical Psychological Operations Team broadcast messages to the complex residents about the coalition's objective.

Two explosive ordnance disposal teams were on site and a platoon of AH-64 Apache helicopters provided air support for the duration of the operation.

This operation was the wrap up of a trilogy of large-scaled cordon and searches planned by the brigade — the first two were conducted during Operation Iron Hammer.

Reports show the Abu

Ghurayb area to be a dangerous place for coalition forces, and additional intelligence reports over the past several months narrowed in on the particular apartment complex as a haven for anti-coalition forces.

"These are the guys supposedly attacking us," said Spc. Travis Morrone, Company A, 1-325 AIR, who was part of the operation's search element. "We had to come take their (weapons) from them."

Intelligence efforts paying off, the search revealed more than 220 AK-47 assault rifles, along with a number of machine guns, pistols and other rifles; five rocket-propelled grenades and 15 RPG sights; 10 grenades; 12 mortar sights; various electrical components associated with improvised explosive device construction; Russian-made night vision devices; protective masks; 24 plates of body armor and a U.S.-made vest; Saddam Hussein paraphernalia; and 16 cases of U.S. military meals, ready to eat.

Additionally, more than 40 people were detained, including three from

2-70's by-name "black" list of suspects.

According to Ringler, the three were caught in the outer cordon while trying to escape the area.

"(One man) is possibly responsible for the mortar attack against the MPs in the old Abu Ghurayb Police Station (that killed a soldier)," Ringler said.

This operation is just another "day at the office" for soldiers like Morrone.

"For a while we were doing (cordon and searches) every other day," he said. Now they do them less frequently, but with larger masses of forces, he said.

And their proficiency showed in the overall success of Operation Mammoth, according to the 3rd BCT commander.

"Our soldiers have become a seasoned combat force," said Col.

Russ Gold, 3BCT commander. "The two battalions conducting this offensive operation also participated in the ground war. They know how to use finesse and brute force, and when to use what means. They are a professional and extremely competent group of soldiers that will act with precision and exactness with little to no guidance."

The key in an operation like this is to reassure the residents that the Coalition is there only to weed out the bad guys, Gold said.

No shots were fired during this operation; however, the thought of danger lurking around the corner was not to be dismissed.

"One of Colonel Gold's sayings is, he uses the three Ps: be polite, be professional, but be prepared to kill," Ringler said. "That's the motto that goes through the brigade."

"Our soldiers have become a seasoned combat force."

— Col. Russ Gold
3 BCT commander



Pfc. Reed Roalf labels AK-47 assault rifles captured during a cordon and search of an apartment complex in Abu Ghurayb, Iraq Dec. 4.



Third Brigade Combat Team soldiers and Iraqi Civil Defense Corps members wait to move to the next stack of apartments during a cordon and search of an apartment complex in Abu Ghurayb, Iraq Dec. 4.

Operation Iron Hammer

ICDC, paratroopers patrol city in search of weapons, insurgents

By **Spc. Jason B. Baker**
49th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGHDAD — Members of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps conducted their first cordon and search operation with paratroopers from the 2nd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division operating in Al Rashid District as part of Operation Iron Hammer Nov. 17.

The ICDC troops began the operation walking south along Highway 8, the primary highway into Baghdad, searching the roadside and adjacent neighborhoods for illegal weapons, unexploded ordnance and improvised explosive devices.

During the operation, a team of 1st Armored Division combat engineers from Company A, 16th Engineer

Battalion, used mine-detecting equipment to sweep a four-and-half-kilometer stretch of the highway.

"Normally (the ICDC) just do sweeps along the road," said Capt. Ben Luper, commander, Battery B, 2nd Bn., 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment. "This was a little different."

As the ICDC troops made their way through the neighborhoods, their U.S. counterparts assisted the company of Iraqi Corpsmen, new to this type of work, said Luper.

The ICDC troops and paratroopers from the 82nd's 2nd Brigade Combat Team confiscated several rifles, pistols and ammunition as violations of the Iraqi Weapons Policy. The current policy states that each household is entitled to one weapon and no more than one magazine.

Iraqi and Coalition forces also uncovered caches where they found over a hundred mortar rounds and a rocket-propelled grenade.

"This is a great beginning for them," said Sgt. Jose Salinas, artilleryman, Battery B, 2nd Bn. 319th AFAR. "And it's a great experience for us. We get to teach them how to do things, the proper

way to search, how to use force, when to escalate or deescalate a situation."

The Iraqi Civil Defense Corps is similar to the U.S. National Guard and augments Coalition Forces in maintaining a safe and secure environment for the people of Iraq.

The corpsman must complete a two-week initial entry training course where he learns basic combat skills. Once training is complete, he is sent to a company that augments one of the brigade combat team's battalions.

The battalions incorporate the ICDC into regular operations and continue to refine their skills and teach them new disciplines.

Luper explained that during this particular mission, he allowed the corpsmen to conduct the operation on their own, relying on him only as a guide and a mentor.

Another important role the operation played in the development of the ICDC troops is how they were received by the local Iraqis, said Luper.

Participating in a large-scale operation like a cordon and search mission helps the local citizens understand the purpose of the ICDC. "Some (of the residents) had not seen (the ICDC) yet," Salinas said. "I think they received them pretty well and will appreciate them more later."



Capt. Ben Luper, commander, Battery B, 2nd Bn. 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, talks to his translator as he watches ICDC troops search a house during a cordon and search operation in southern Baghdad Nov. 19.

Model village opens homes for 42 families

Spc. Mary Rose Xenikakis
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

DU KARDAKAN — The Makmour girls choir sang during a ribbon cutting ceremony Dec. 6 at the opening of the new village named Du Kardakan, a town between Qayyah and Makhmur.

"This day is a great day in history for this area. We've come a long way since the old regime," said Rakman Abdullah Belav, Du Kardakan mayor.

The village was raised, after the resolution of land claims, with the help from Coalition Forces and non-governmental agencies like Qandil and the U.N. High Commission for Refugees. The town also known as "Model Village," is now home to many families. There are 40 Kurdish

families and two Arab families.

For more than 100 years there was a village where Du Kardakan now stands, but the village was destroyed in 1978. The village was historically known as a Kurdish village.

The Iraqi government destroyed the village, removed the Kurdish population and then redistributed the land.

"Du Kardakan (Model Village) has been reborn. This day we've been waiting for, for months," said Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus, commanding general, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). "When we first arrived in Northern Iraq this area was just open fields. Now we have 42 homes occupied by families."

Petraeus gave credit to the local

families for quickly rebuilding the village. He said the rebuilding was done mostly by the locals themselves. "The rebirth of Dukarkan is really a miracle. Where five months ago there were only farm lands, there are now 42 homes and a children's choir. The roads have been improved and the community center is complete," Petraeus said.

"Though there is work that still



Local leaders of Du Kardakan along with Maj. Gen David H. Petraeus, the commanding general of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), cut the ribbon opening the road to the entrance of the newly built village, Du Kardakan.

needs to be done on some of the houses, the progress is still extraordinary. Now, Du Kardakan stands as an example to all of Iraq," he said.



How's the food?

Gen. B.B. Bell, the U.S. Army, Europe commander, meets with Task Force 1st Armored Division soldiers at Baghdad International Airport Dec. 3.

Colorado 'Bandits' secure streets in, out of 'East Los Angeles of Iraq'

By Spc. Chuck D. Meseke
82nd Airborne Division PAO

HUSAYBAH — Bandit Troop, 1st Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, from Fort Carson, Colo., went on the offensive in one of Iraq's most volatile towns, Husaybah during Operation Rifles Blitz.

"Husaybah is like the East Los Angeles of Iraq; it's just a rough neighborhood," said Pfc. Carl Roush, a scout with Bandit Troop. "It's a nice place to visit, but I would hate to live here."

Operation Rifles Blitz began Nov. 20 and was designed to isolate and target the anti-coalition fighters who have proven to be an escalating problem in the border region near the city of Al Qa'im.

Bandit Troop's responsibility during the operation fell on securing the main avenue of approach in and out of the city, allowing other 3rd ACR troops, combined with soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division, to conduct raids on targets identified to be insurgents operating against the Coalition.

Roush and the others of Bandit Troop recalled their stay in the city's Baath Party headquarters from Oct. 18 to Nov. 8.

"We were attacked on a daily basis in the compound, and at the end we had counted up more than 80 mortars launched at us within one week," said 1st Lt. Shannon Thompson, a platoon leader in Bandit.

The enemy was also much different from those they had faced in other parts of Iraq, Thompson explained.

"They were coordinated attacks, moved their positions, could aim their mortars, even were using cell phones to communicate with each other," said

Thompson. "That is when we started thinking, this isn't the local Joe. They were landing mortars inside the courtyard of the compound and even landed one on top of the (observation point)."

About 3,500 soldiers have been a part of Rifles Blitz and it has netted numerous detainees and uncovered intelligence on the whereabouts of anti-Coalition fighters.

"When we show up like this with 3,500 soldiers,

100 individuals, as well as hundreds of weapons, numerous materials used for making improvised explosive devices and anti-Coalition documents.

Even while conducting such an aggressive operation, the soldiers found small ways to foster good will between themselves and the Iraqi people.

One family that had been particularly helpful to the soldiers of Bandit Troop was rewarded not only monetarily, but was given medical assistance from Pfc. Eddie Barrier, a combat medic.

Barrier, with the help of an interpreter, was able to give medicine to a sick woman in the family. He also arranged for her to see a military.

"The family was helping us out with info so we did what we could to help her," Barrier said.

Such treatment is not uncommon from U.S. soldiers.

"If we are around and have the time and resources to help someone out, we do," said Barrier. "It's my job."

This kind of outreaching to the people of Husaybah was the initial strategy when trying to bring security to the city, but eventually prolonged attacks led to aggressive operations.

"We tried the passive approach, but that didn't work. Now we have had to raise our intensity," said Roush.

With intensity in mind, the soldiers of Bandit Troop, and the 3rd ACR continue to conduct Operation Rifles Blitz to bring security and stability to one of the most volatile regions of Iraq.

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**— 1st Lt. Shannon Thompson
'Bandit' platoon leader**

it shows the local people that it is okay for them to show us where the bad guys are, and they don't have to be afraid of those people," Thompson said.

"Just the other day, we have had informants say, 'they are shooting at you from my front yard,' and the tips that lead to hits, we will give them rewards accordingly," Thompson said.

Intelligence has led to the capture of more than

Flying High

1st BCT adopts Arabian falcon as mascot

By Spc.

Melissa

Walther

367th Mobile

Public Affairs

Detachment

TIKRIT – An ancient symbol of strength and wisdom to the Arab people, the falcon is now a symbol of friendship between Iraqis and members of the 1st Brigade Combat Team.

An Arabian falcon, known locally as a shahean, was given to the brigade by Jasim Hammed Jabarah Jubutia, the governor of the Salah Ad Din province, as a gesture of friendship, said Lt. Col. Troy Smith, 1st BCT's executive officer.

Named Sky Raider by the soldiers, the majestic bird has become an unofficial mascot for the Raider Brigade, as well as a common sight in the tactical operations center at Camp Raider.

"The falcon is a symbol of Iraq," said Spc. Yusef Al-Ghamdi, a tanker from Killen, Texas, who acts as an interpreter with B Company, 1st



Photo by Spc. Melissa Walther/367 MPAD
Lieutenant Col. Troy Smith, 1st Brigade Combat Team's executive officer, holds Sky Raider as he waits for his breakfast.

Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment. "It's a very expensive gift."

Not only is Al-Ghamdi a tanker and interpreter, he is also knowledgeable about training falcons, a talent he picked up while working for an oil company in Saudi Arabia.

Al-Ghamdi said he learned falconry because "the princes used to hunt with falcons and they taught me."

That training seems to be paying off as Al-Ghamdi teaches Sky Raider various commands.

"I spend a few hours a day training him," said Al-Ghamdi. "I'm training him to return to the glove without using jesses to tether him."

Caring for a falcon has been challenging, the brigade soldiers have learned, especially when it comes to

finding the right food. That usually means gathering wild pigeons every morning.

"We all share in the responsibility of taking care of him," Smith said. When the soldiers can't bag the falcon's breakfast, they get some live pigeons from local residents.

"We're trying to take good care of him," said Al-Ghamdi. "He's an important gift."

Kirkuk Air Base Chapel Schedule

Friday

5 a.m., 7 p.m. – Islamic prayer

9 a.m. – Catholic Mass (Sky Soldier chapel)

Saturday

7 p.m. – Catholic Mass

Sunday

8 a.m. – Gospel Service

9 a.m. – Catholic Mass

(Sky Soldier chapel)

10 a.m. – General Protestant

11:30 a.m. – Catholic Mass

1 p.m. – Latter-Day Saints

2 p.m. – Catholic Mass (Sky Soldiers Chapel)

7 p.m. – Protestant Service

Tuesday

6:30 p.m. – Growing as a Christian: Studying the Book of James

Wednesday

8 a.m. – The Bible in Light of Current History and Local Events

5:30 p.m. – Building Your Faith: Studying the Book of Hebrews

*All services are held at the Ten Days From Tomorrow Chapel unless otherwise noted. Times subject to change. Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist and other denominations should contact chapel administration for updates on their religious requirements and support.



Music to my ears

Troops listen to holiday and patriotic tunes performed by the 1st Armored Division Band and Choir Dec. 12 and 13 at the Iraq Convention Center. The band traveled around the region spreading holiday cheer.

Photo by Spc. James Decker